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# THE BIBLE AS GOOD READING

BY  
ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE



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## THE BIBLE AS GOOD READING

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### I. IN THE BIG WOODS.

"I wish I had something to read," said He.

"Well, what's the matter with the magazines?" promptly replied the Other One.

"I have read them all," He immediately objected.

"Why, I thought you didn't want to read anything. I thought you said this was to be a vacation in the woods, with no reading or thought or anything else," said the Other One.

"Well, of course," said He; "but a fellow has got to have something to read, after all."

"Well," said the Other One, "let me read you something out of the Bible."

"The Bible!" said He. "Oh, no! I want some *good reading*; that's what I want."

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They were in camp in the deep woods, many days' canoe trip from a human being. They were two tired-out men—wholly tired out when they started, with non-productive brains, and with sore, ragged nerves, from their year's hard work. They were none the less worn out that it had been a year of successful work—even of triumphant work.

So they said when they started: "Let's get a rest. Let's not even take any reading material. Let's obey Emerson. His advice to the rest-seeker in his Wood Notes, where he says to leave everything behind: 'Enough to thee the primal mind.'"

And so they did. They arranged for their guides carefully (and you who go to the woods look well to that). They were scrupulous to the last degree about their cook (and you who go to the woods be very sure about that). They were particular about their tents, almost technical about food and sleeping accommodations and creature comforts. But reading matter—none of it for them. At the

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last minute, obeying the impulse of the civilized, they brought all the magazines in sight; and one of them, who always carried a Bible, had it with him on this occasion.

So, up the streams and over the lakes they went, and at last, far out from the path of even canoe voyagers, on the shores of a lake whose name is Beauty, and in the depths of a forest whose name is Noble, by a mossy spring whose name is Delight, they swung their axes and built their camp. Already Nature had begun her work. They slept like pieces of iron, with this difference — there was the delicious consciousness of going to sleep and ecstasy on awakening. They ate with the appetite of the primal man, but with the restraint of the civilized one when out in the wilderness. They were careful to get up from their meal always a little hungry. They joyed in the woods. The flight of birds was a thing to be looked at and to get pleasure from. The forests had strange, attractive sounds. The occasional sentences of the guides were full of wisdom.

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Instantly Nature began her work on the brain cells. These men had planned not to think at all. They were astonished to find that they thought more than ever and more sanely, more calmly, and yet with a good deal more vigor. Every suggestion of tree, and flower, and cloud, and shadow and shine was fecund with thought. The rain induced more than sleep; it induced a curious yet a delightful mental life. There was none of your neurotic thoughts which come of overworked nerves and all that sort of thing.

Of course, you can't keep that kind of men down to not thinking at all. Their bodies, which so long have been unused and maltreated, demand exercise—long rambles among the trees and over mountains; canoe trips where every stroke generates more energy than it expends; target practice with pistol until the snuffing of a candle at night at twenty yards, three times out of five, is no extraordinary feat. Well, then, it was plain to see how the minds of these men demanded

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exercise just as the body did; for the minds had been more maltreated and neglected than the body.

"So I want something to read," said He.

"Well, what's the matter with the Bible?" said the Other One.

"Oh," said He, "I don't want anything dull. I don't want to be preached to. I feel in a religious mood, but not in the mood for a sermon."

"Why, man," said the Other One, "the Bible has more *good* reading in it than any book I know of. What will you have—poetry, adventure, politics, maxims, oratory. For they are all here." And he produced the Bible.

Thus occurred the first Bible reading in the woods. After it was over: "Why, I never knew that was in the Bible," said He. "Let's have some more of that to-morrow."

And on the morrow they did have more of it. By chance, one of the guides was near and he sat down and listened. The next day all

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the guides were there. The day after, the reading was delayed and Indian Charley modestly suggested: "Isn't it about time to have some more of that there Bible?" And more of it they had.

This continued day in and day out through the long, but all too brief, vacation in the woods—the real woods, the deep woods, the limitless woods—none of your parks with trees in them.

The comments of the guides were serious, keen, full of human interest. It was no trouble for them to understand Isaiah. They had the same spirit that inspired David when he went up against Goliath. They knew, with their deep, elemental natures, the kind of woman Ruth was and Rebekah was. Moses slaying the Egyptian and leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, laying down the law in good, strict man-fashion, was entirely intelligible to them. One wonders what the "higher critics" and "scholarly interpreters" of the Holy Scriptures would have thought had they seen these



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plain men, learned in the wisdom of the woods, understanding quite clearly the twelfth chapter of Romans, or the voluptuous Song of Solomon, or the war song of Moses, or, most of all, the Sermon on the Mount.

"Why, I never knew those things were in the Bible. How did you ever get on to them?" said He one day, when a perfectly charming story had been read.

"Why, this way," said the Other One. "Many years ago in a logging camp, there happened to be nothing to read, and I just *had* to read. I had read everything—that is to say, I had read everything but the Bible. And I did not want to read that. I had read it over and over again in the church and in my own home, and always with that monotonous non-intelligence, that utter lack of human understanding that makes all the men and women of the Bible, as ordinarily interpreted to us, putty-like characters without any human attributes. But there was nothing else to read. So I was forced to read the Bible, and I instantly be-

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came fascinated with it. I discovered what every year since that has confirmed—that there is more ‘good reading’ in the Bible than in all the volumes of fiction, poetry and philosophy put together. So when I get tired of everything else, and want something really good to read, something that is charged full of energy and human emotions, of cunning thought and everything that arrests the attention and thrills or soothes or uplifts you, according to your mood, I find it in the Bible.”

It is natural enough, is it not? Surely this book has not held its sway over the human mind for two thousand years without having engaging qualities—something that appeals to our “human interest.” Surely the Old Testament, which is a story of the most masterful and persistent people who ever lived, a people who have seen nations rise and fall, dynasties grow and perish like mushrooms—I mean the Jews—surely such a history cannot help being charged with thought, and emotion, and love, and hate, and plot, and plan, with frailty

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and ideality, with cowardice and courage, with anarchy and law, with waywardness and obedience, with the flowing of milk and honey on the one hand, and battle "till the sun stood still" on the other hand. No, surely, such a chronicle could not help overflowing with everything human.

And surely, too, the New Testament, which is the account of the Man who dominates all Christendom to-day, the Man who is the most powerful influence in civilization two thousand years after He has passed from earth; surely such an account could not be without a fascination, compared with which our most thrilling novels and most passionate poems are vapid and tame. And, of course, the New Testament, with its vivid account of the life-work and deeds, with the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, is not without these elements. And, when you add to these merely human elements of the Old and New Testaments the divine quality glorifying it all, you have by far the best litera-

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ture in the world; and not the best literature only, but by far the most interesting literature.

You have not only the development of the only divine religion known to man, but you have easily the best reading to be found in all the libraries. It is of the Bible from this last point of view that this little book is written. I am talking now to those who are asking each night about their firesides for "something good to read"; and I am telling them to read the standard novels, and more than the standard novels—the standard histories and biographies; and more than the standard histories and biographies—the standard poets; and more than both of these, the current magazines and all of them, for they are the living expression of the world's thought to-day; but I am telling that, more than all of these put together, they will find "good reading" considered from the viewpoint of "good reading" and nothing else, between the covers of that volume which every home would be ashamed to be without, but

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which, curiously enough, is the last one to be read.

Or is it curiously enough? Is not the neglect of the Bible as mere literature due to the intellectual indigestion acquired early in youth as to this particular book by the unintelligent way in which it is read at the fireside and from the pulpit? I say unintelligent, merely because, to our young men and young women, when they are boys and girls, nothing but text and precept and maxims are read, and these are declaimed with an offensive solemnity that defeats its very purpose.

But take the Bible up as an account of mighty men and extraordinary women and the most wonderful of people; take it up as a purely "human document" (you will get the religion in it as you go along), and know how fascinating it is. I wish space permitted a chapter upon the Bible as "good reading" under each of the following titles:

The Bible and Adventure, The Bible and Art, The Bible and Politics, The Bible and

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Statesmanship, The Bible and Poetry, The Bible and Oratory.

Having got all these you would not fail to get what all of them combined tell: The Bible and Religion. But let us take up some illustrations of each of these in another chapter.

## II. OLD TESTAMENT SHORT STORIES: DAVID.

First of all, the Bible is by far the most admirable compendium of the best short stories to be found in the literature of the world. Forgetting this, the consensus of modern literary criticism is that the French are the best tellers of short stories. And yet the French short stories—perfect as they are when compared with other fiction—are crude and prolix compared with the short stories of the Bible, which, after all, are not stories, but the plain telling of actual human occurrences. They are of every kind too. Suppose, for example, you want to read a story of adventure—one that will make your blood jump and yet uplift you.

Very well; turn to the seventeenth chapter of First Samuel, and read how the golden-haired, ruddy-cheeked, blue-eyed young He-

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brew called David came from the shepherding of his father's flocks, bringing food for his brothers, who were soldiers in the Israelitish army encamped on the side of a mountain. On the opposite side of the valley was the army of the Philistines.

Those were tremendous days for fighting. Men slew men with primitive ferocity. It was the time of that rude chivalry where a single combatant from one camp would challenge the other camp to produce an antagonist, and settle the whole affray in a single-handed fight. We read of the same custom in early Roman history. It reappeared in the medieval times. Indeed, in one form or another, it has always been here and always will be here.

The Philistines had a fighter who had never found his match, and the terror of his fame was upon the land. He was a tremendously big man physically, and unlike most physical giants his nerve was as fine and as tense as his body was great (for, to digress, most phys-



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ically big men are nervously inferior). And this Philistine man of might was as brave as he was tall. Also he was as hard as nails.

There wasn't anybody in all Israel who dared "go up against" him. And that was saying a good deal; for the ancient Hebrews were perhaps the best fighting men the world has yet produced. They were as daring as courage itself. They were schooled in combat. They always believed that they were fighting under the command of the Most High, and the strict obedience required of them to the amazing and minute laws of health laid down by Moses made them altogether, in muscle, nerve and brain, unsurpassed as warriors by any men of any time, unless we may except the Japanese Samurai.

And yet, when the Philistine champion came out before the army of Israel and cried, "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together," Saul and all Israel "were dismayed, and greatly afraid."

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And day after day, while the opposing armies rested, this defiance was renewed.

Pretty soon, of course, this had its effect. The Hebrews began to lose heart. They began to "lose their nerve," as the saying is. Worse than this, they were humiliated. They began to be ashamed. And when you have at once humiliated a man, and also scared him to death, he is the most pitiable of spectacles. Take it all together, it was a heart-rending situation when the blond young musician (David had yellow hair and blue eyes and a "peaches-and-cream" complexion, you know) arrived in the camp with some bread for his brothers. For you must remember that David played on the harp and sang well; so far as that is concerned, he did nearly everything well. I have often thought that Emerson must have had him in mind in his wonderful lines on Character when he says:

His tongue was framed to music,  
His hand was armed with skill,  
His face was the mold of beauty  
And his heart was the throne of will.

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When David arrived he saw the fearfulness of Goliath; his blood turned to fire, and he shouted out, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" And the soldiers told him all about it; and then the blue-eyed shepherd boy went to Saul and told him that he would be the Hebrew champion.

Of course, Saul said, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

Then David made the argument that heroes have made in different words from the foundation of the world. There was a courage in his heart all his own, and faith in his soul from on high. He was another of the type of Joan of Arc or of Nelson or of our own Lawrence.

They put armor upon him, but he could not move in it. He wasn't used to it, so he put it off of him; he took instead his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones out of the

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brook, and put them in his shepherd's bag, and his sling was in his hand and he drew near to the Philistine. When Goliath saw David, he was furious with insult, and roared out the denunciation that you might expect, telling David what he would do to him, and what, by all the rules of the game, it was apparently certain he would do to him. David's answer was as noble as his courage:

Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.

There spoke the voice of the soul of the Hebrew people. There was a defiance that

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answered Goliath's own and overwhelmed it. Also, it dazed the mighty Philistine warrior. What! a mere boy say this to him! It was astounding—more, it was absurd! And still more, it was insulting! And then the fight took place. The world has not yet forgotten this immortal combat. And for "good reading" in the realm of adventure nothing has been produced that comes anywhere near it.

I have not been long in telling this. And yet, condensing it all I can, I have been a good deal longer than the Bible is in relating this story. And I have left out a good deal, at that. That is one characteristic of everything that is written in the Bible. It is condensed. It fairly snaps and sizzles with condensation. It is full of action, and although it reports conversations, gives the arguments that are used pro and con, describes incidents, it is all done so quickly and naturally and to the point that you can read it in five minutes.

To the stories of David alone I might de-

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vote as much space as this volume contains; for of him the Scriptures tell us more "good stories" than of any other man (with the possible exception of Joseph), mentioned in the whole Bible. No hero of any age was more versatile; the great Leonardo himself was not so many-sided.

Already we have seen this golden-haired lad—a "mere boy" minding or tending his father's flocks, wrestling with lion, bear, finally killing the veteran and giant champion, in single combat. Later we shall find him at the court of King Saul, harp before him, charming away his master's blues and making friends right and left. To know David was to love him; and it was this very popularity that was so nearly his undoing. You remember how Saul, overcome by jealousy, time, time and again, by fair means or foul, sought to slay his young lieutenant; and how David, each time he had Saul in his power, stayed his hand and spared the life of his most treacherous and relentless enemy.

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Loyalty and generosity were dominant traits of David's character. Read the First Book of Samuel and you will find them illustrated an hundred times. You will find, too, that this is a story of such absorbing, rugged interest as to make the adventure novel of the year seem but the tawdriest of pinchbeck. David, you must remember, was one of your restless fellows, one of those human dynamos all a-crackle with energy; a reformer, fighting man, righter of wrongs, poet and politician—in a word, a born leader of men. He was, to be sure, the Lord's Anointed, and had a divine destiny before him; but leaving that out of the question, we know that he was one of the best all-round men of his day and generation—and the Lord as well as the world is always looking for just that kind of men. His training, temperament and abilities irresistibly drew him into the military or public life of camp and court which gave him that stern schooling that was to make him the master of the Chosen People. Like all great men, he had his ups and downs. In

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his youth, at his monarch's royal board, with a score of valiant deeds to his credit, we find him fêted and courted on every hand. Only a few years later we see him in the Cave of Adullam, leader of a ragged band of poor debtors and malcontents. A sorry crew those four hundred bankrupts and ne'er-do-wells; but David, mind you, was their leader! And so we follow him step by step until he comes into his own and reigns in Jerusalem—and some mighty "good reading" we have had by the way!

Big men make big mistakes. If they are good men they survive them. Peter thrice denied his Lord and lived his cowardice down; another once betrayed Him and made the name of Judas a hissing for the ages. Even David's life had its blacker pages; and yet he was "a man after God's own heart." If you would see him at his best and at his worst (and give yourself up to the charm of one of the most moving tales in all literature), read the story of Uriah the Hittite and his Little Ewe Lamb.



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Turn to the Second Book of Samuel and read in the eleventh and twelfth chapters that wonderful recital of unlawful love, black treachery, swift punishment and bitter remorse. What could be more exquisite than Nathan's simple and moving parable in which the young wife the king has stolen becomes the poor man's Little Ewe Lamb snatched away and butchered by his wealthy neighbor? How can one better employ a quarter of an hour than in reading this little masterpiece?

Is it surprising that David's vast and varied knowledge of men should come to full flower in the wisdom of his son Solomon? A thousand years hence, our descendants will still be marveling over the dozen verses (I Kings 3: 16-28) that chronicle Solomon's judgment between the two mothers. Cite, if you can, a single instance in modern literature that shows keener or wiser perception of the fundamentals of human nature!



### III. OLD TESTAMENT SHORT STORIES: LOVE, COURTSHIP AND INTRIGUE.

The earlier books of the Bible afford as many entertaining stories as the ones we have just been discussing. And they are not only entertaining, but they are crammed full of real life, of knowledge of men, of old world shrewdness. Of late years there has been a furor for nature books; but which of them displays closer observation than Jacob showed when he tended Laban's flocks and by an absurdly simple device trebled his wage of ring-straked cattle? A dozen or fifteen verses in the thirtieth chapter of Genesis tell the whole story. Turn back a few pages and you find the tale of Jacob and Esau and the story of Abraham and Isaac—a story of pathos (albeit with a "pleasant ending") that rouses the dullest man's sympathies. If you would

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still have more short stories, read of Elijah and Elisha; of young Samson, his riddle and his Delilah. If you would know the horrors of a beleaguered city, turn to the last ten verses of the sixth chapter of the Second Book of Kings. Daniel furnishes an almost unbroken series of readable adventures; and Jonah (in the fourth chapter) an extraordinary insight into human nature and a lesson of sublime beauty.

Let me impress upon you that in every Bible story there is always "something doing." Let us take, for example, two flash-lights that illustrate this, and from a beautiful point of view. I have often thought that were I a painter I would paint at least two pictures, if I never painted any others.

The first of these is the picture of the first gentleman described in all the literature of the world. Abraham, growing old, considered that the time had come when his son Isaac should have a wife. There were many beauti-

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ful young women in the land, any one of whom would have made an excellent wife for Abraham's son. But with that deep wisdom which never fails to bear the fruit of happiness and well-being, he said that Isaac must have a wife from among his own people. So he sent his most trusted servant with camels and presents to go into the land where people of his own race dwelt and there search out a wife, Abraham giving to this trusted servant definite instructions.

After a time the servant and his train of camels came to the city of Nahor, and the servant made up his mind that the way he would decide among the damsels that came down to the well for water (for it was the custom of all the young women to come down to the well of the community and take water in a pitcher for the family) would be thus: the one, who, when he asked of her a drink of water should not only give him a drink, but also say, "I will give thy camels drink also," was the fit mate for his master's son.

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So, among others, down came Rebekah to the well; and he asked her for a drink of water from her pitcher. Whereupon she said, "Drink." . . . And the Bible proceeds to say that, when she had done giving him drink, she said, "I will draw water for thy camels also." She was the real woman, you see; one who thought it a fine thing to be gracious.

Then follows the story of the strange courtship by proxy, after the Oriental custom. Rebekah is described as very beautiful. The end of this part of the story is that, consenting herself and with the consent of all her family, she went with Abraham's servant to meet her future husband.

About the time when they might be expected to return, Isaac went out into the field to meditate at eventide. We can see him—can we not?—as the purple evening fell and night come on, tall and slender and full of that vigor which was to father a race, walking in the field thinking, and thinking—think-

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ing of his future and of his destiny, and most of all of her who was coming and who would make all worth while and glorify his life.

And then, goes on the story in the words of the Bible, "he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming." And when the camels bearing his bride had arrived, Rebekah lighted down from the camel, and then occurs this exquisite picture—the picture of the first gentleman in literature. He "brought her into his mother Sarah's tent." And so ends this tender and beautiful tale of delicacy and refinement, of chivalry and manner, which made up the character of this first of that race of men whom the world has always loved and will always love—the race of gentlemen.

Beautiful manners, courtly behavior and the unselfishness that underlies all true nobility, are constantly found in the characters of the Bible. If you would like to rest yourself with a tender story of fidelity, read the Book of Ruth. Con-

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sidered merely as "good reading," it is easily the best short story ever written. But it is better than that—it tells the tale of the most loyal unselfishness of which there is any record. It is proverbial that no man nor woman can get along with his or her mother-in-law; but it is a modern proverb. The men and women of the Bible found no difficulty of that kind, and of this, Ruth is the best illustration.

When Ruth's husband died, his mother, Naomi, who was a very poor woman, told her daughter-in-law that it would not be fair to waste her beauty and youth remaining with a poverty-stricken old woman and that it would be best for her to go back to her own people where she could take up the broken thread of her life. Ruth would not do it. Orpah, another widowed daughter-in-law of Naomi, took the old lady's advice, but Ruth was steadfast, and uttered these words—words so exquisite, pure and exalted, that to this day they uplift us. Said Ruth:



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Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried.

These words were to an aged and poverty-stricken mother-in-law, mind you, and were uttered by the loveliest of red-lipped maidens with all her life before her.

It is hard to imagine what would have happened to the forlorn old woman if her daughter-in-law had not been so "stedfastly minded," as the Bible puts it, for it was Ruth who provided her with the necessities of life by gleaning in the fields of Boaz. This Boaz was a fine man. I wish every rich man might study his character. He followed the ancient law of Moses which commanded the owners of fields and vineyards to leave something on their vines, trees, and grain fields for the poor to gather up.

So when Ruth went into his fields to glean with the other maidens, Boaz observed that she

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was a stranger, modest, industrious and attractive; and he commanded the young men who were harvesting not to molest her and ordered his overseer to take care that not only the gleanings but an occasional sheaf was left for her to gather up. It was by gathering up this grain left for her, that Ruth was able to provide her aged mother-in-law with food and keep her alive.

Strenuous or gentle, the women of the Bible are always "doing things." There is not a lazy woman in all the Scriptures—no *dolce far niente* creatures, no relaxed and languorous idlers. If they were kindly and comforting at heart they showed it by doing kindly and comforting things all the time, as was the case with Ruth, or Hannah, or Rebekah. If they were of strong spirit they were always counseling, leading and inspiring. Deborah and Esther were types of the patriotic woman. If you would like some good reading where hatred, vanity, revenge and judgment are written with the pen of power, read about this Esther.

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When by her remarkable charm and beauty and "drawing" personality, Esther had become queen, she appears to have had the one purpose in life of pleasing and caring for her lord, the king—a very trivial purpose, no doubt, but still the purpose for which God made man man and woman woman; the one to protect and provide—the other to comfort and soothe.

Everything would probably have gone along well if Haman, the king's right-hand man, had not plotted against Mordecai, Esther's uncle. The reason why Haman was so "down on" Mordecai was because the proud old man, Jew though he was, would never bow or uncover to him. In revenge, Haman conspired to have Mordecai hanged; and hatched an anti-Semitic plot for the total extermination of the Jews. Just at that point Esther appeared as the figure of destiny, and at the risk of her own life saved her people, turned the tables on Haman and won promotion and honor for her kinsman.

A good way to test the tremendous pith and

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point of the Bible narrative is to read over a portion of it, get it thoroughly in mind; then close the Bible and try to write out yourself the very things you have just read. You will find that you will use two or three times as many words as the Bible does, do the best you can.

Of course, stories of adventure are very numerous in the Bible—the volume is packed full of them.

But suppose you want some other kind of story—intrigue, let us say, or diplomacy. You will find it all in the history of David. His craft in statesmanship equaled his courage in war. It is fascinating to see how he laid the foundation of that dynasty from which sprang our Saviour.

If you want “human-interest” stories that yet involve statesmanship, diplomacy and war you will find them all crowded into the life of David. And through them all you will find fundamental, almost primal, human passions running at high tide.

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For example, David loved women—man-fashion and violently he loved them—and that led him, man of God though he was, into wrongdoing. And the hatred of the people of that time was equal to their love, and their grief was something terrible. When the men of that time and race hated, that meant a killing. We see it in the same race as late as the time of the play of the Merchant of Venice, where that wonderful old character, Shylock, exclaims, "Hates any man the thing he would not kill?"

While David is the master character throughout all his period, and, indeed, one of the master characters of all time and of all peoples, that period was full of characters. The fact is that the Bible is made up of big characters, men and women and children, loving, plotting, warring, hating, intriguing, philosophizing, praying, forgiving, doing justice and working righteousness, yet falling to the lowest depths.

Stories of adventure never lose their fascina-

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tion. Indeed, Mr. Rider Haggard, in a thoughtful essay says that there is an increasing love for tales of this kind, and explains it upon the ground that it is a reaction against our neurotically complex civilization. The Bible is full of these narratives. As I have pointed out, there is not a Hebrew to-day who does not glory in the craft, courage and inspiration of Gideon. Who can forget the exaltation of Disraeli, that greatest of English statesmen, who, when speaking of the princes of Israel, always named Gideon? The famous night attack of this Hebrew captain has always reminded me of Washington's night passage of the Delaware and his thunderbolt assault on the Hessians at Trenton. The Israelites had fallen into bad straits. "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years."

And the Midianites "didn't do a thing" to the Jews. They "destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no

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sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass."

In that black hour a leader arose for the oppressed people, just as leaders for the masses always rise when their situation becomes desperate. It is true that the Bible says that God sent His angel to Gideon; but for myself I believe that all great leaders of the people always have been and always will be directly inspired from on high. I find no difference between the divine guidance of Moses and a like direction of Washington and Lincoln.

It is picturesquely characteristic that the angel found Gideon threshing his wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. Nearly all the great leaders of the people are found thus in the common occupations when they are called to lead the people. So with Jackson and with Cromwell and with Joan of Arc; and the mighty Peter threw aside the barbaric pomp and luxury of a Czar to work as a humble laborer in a common shipyard of Holland. Gideon himself says: "My family

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is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

Nevertheless, the angel hailed him, "Thou mighty man of valor!" for he saw quite through the externals into the soul of the man. It is a curious thing how the mysterious quality of daring is almost impossible of discovery until occasion develops it. The quiet man may have it and, on the contrary, the most ostentatious and vainglorious man may have it; as witness Major Burnham, the famous American scout, who, so far as deeds prove anything, is the most daring man alive to-day. On the other hand, consider Murat, Napoleon's famous marshal, who was vainglorious to a ludicrous point, but who was as brave as he was vainglorious.

Gideon was a good deal of a doubter. He could not make out how he, with the poor material he had among the deteriorated Hebrews, could prevail over the well-equipped Midianites. And he asks miracles to prove it; and so you will remember that the dew fell only on



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the fleece and none on the floor around it which was dry. Even that did not satisfy him, and he reversed the process, and the dew fell on the floor and none on the fleece. He was convinced at last, and gathered the Israelites about him. But they were too many, and everybody that was afraid was sent back. That test lost Gideon twenty-two thousand soldiers and rid him of twenty-two thousand cowards. Ten thousand remained. But Gideon needed tempered steel for this enterprise; he couldn't take anybody with him who was too nice, on the one hand, or too slovenly, on the other hand. So he took them down to the water to drink. Those that bent down on their hands and knees he excused, and those that lapped water with their tongues like a dog he took. That gave him three hundred men. "The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley . . . ; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude."

But they were picked men that Gideon had.

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All the chaff was winnowed out from among them. It was the same situation when a handful of high-grade Greeks utterly overthrew the enormous hosts of the Persians. It was the same situation that all men find everywhere. Do we not see it in politics, where a small band of pure, true, brave men can put to utter rout an immense number of baser quality?

Then came the strategy of the blowing of the trumpets and the breaking pitchers and the lights suddenly revealed, with the result of confusion, dismay, flight in the hostile camp and the resistless onslaught of the Jewish warriors.

#### IV. NEW TESTAMENT SHORT STORIES.

Between the time of Gideon and the age of the Apostles there was an interval of more than twelve hundred years. Before the beginning of the Christian Era, the semi-barbarous tribes on which the early kings of Israel waged incessant warfare had been subdued or exterminated; and Judea herself had become a Roman province. Under the conciliatory rule of Tiberius she enjoyed comparative peace and prosperity. You must not, then, expect to find in the New Testament tales of striplings slaying giants, or of Jewish generals leading forlorn hopes on to victory. Quite different is the type of hero in this later age. As David is the dominant man in the Old Testament, so St. Paul overtops his fellows in the New. In this Roman citizen (as he was proud to call himself) you have a hero for all time. Let us consider his case.

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Here we have a young Pharisee, a gentleman, a man of good family and of some position in the world, with the straitest of Jewish traditions behind him. He has a sound education; he is well grounded in Greek philosophy and Roman law. His abilities are those of a man in a million; a brilliant future is before him. With the fury of a zealot we find him upholding the old church by persecuting the new. In those days religion was no mere fad. It was a matter of freedom or imprisonment; often, one of life or death. And yet, at the bidding of the heavenly voice this young man of Tarsus deliberately turns his back on his rosy future and casts in his lot with a despised and feeble sect whose leaders are peasants and illiterate fishermen. Evidently, the man is a fool or a hero; and you shall see that he is no fool. Glance at the catalogue of St. Paul's hardships (II Cor. 11:22-28) and you will put him in the same class with old Ulysses.

Read of his arrest; of the attempt of the mob on his life; of his trials; of his appeal

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to Cæsar. Then begin at the twenty-seventh chapter of Acts and follow his fortunes as he makes the long and perilous journey from Jerusalem to Rome. In every verse there is action, adventure or hairbreadth escape, until at length the weary captive settles down in Rome in his own hired house.

Does the story of adventure pall? Then turn to the eighth chapter of St. John and you will find (in less than a dozen verses) the portrayal of a scene so dramatic that, even if it held no lofty lesson, it would take high rank as literature. Do you ask for pathos? Read the hundred words beginning at the eleventh verse of the seventh chapter of St. Luke—wonderful, is it not, how a single phrase may color a whole scene? The young man of whom the Evangelist writes, was, you remember, “the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.”



## V. THE BIBLE AND COMMON SENSE.

In the bookstores there are many volumes of "Maxims" and "Thoughts," and they seem to be increasing in number. We have Marcus Aurelius, whose meditations are admirable—I advise every young man to get a copy of the great Roman; Epictetus, whose observations are the keenest to be found in literature anywhere outside of the Bible; La Rochefoucauld, whose cynical wisdom is very bright but poisonous and untrue; and the immortal Tent-maker's Rubáiyát, which, correctly understood, are the best commentary on the perspective of life that I know of. We are having even the sayings of Confucius rendered anew, and a good many modern philosophers of epigram are developing, too.

And they are all worth while. The truth is that almost any man can write good advice

## THE BIBLE AS GOOD READING

if he is in dead earnest. Think, for example, what you who read this would say if you were asked to put in ten pages a series of rules for the guidance of a son, brother, or friend. Try it—you will be astonished at the sound, practical advice you will prescribe. But in this, as in every other form of literature, the Bible is so far superior to all the rest put together that the others seem to be loose and wordy after you have steeped yourself in the Proverbs of the Book of Books.

As a matter of intellectual refreshment—as a mere matter of “good reading”—after you have thrown down your magazines, take up the Bible and read idly and casually from Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. You won’t be able to read very rapidly. You will find yourself so absorbed in every sentence that, in wonder, you will exclaim, “Why did I never read this before?” It will be as if, in curiosity, you opened an old trunk in the attic just to see what was in it and not because you expected to find anything; and then, having opened it, found the



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trunk full of diamonds, making you enormously rich.

Let us try two or three of these proverbs, not selected but taken absolutely at random as the eye happens to fall on a page:

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

or this:

Let thine eyes look right on.

or this:

A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight.

When pride cometh, then cometh shame; but with the lowly is wisdom.

or this:

Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

or this glorious sentence:

Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

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or this, which I think the dearest, sweetest and noblest in the whole Bible:

A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Solomon is ever sending his shafts straight at the heart of slovenliness, hypocrisy and drunkenness. No wonder that our Lord, who descended from Solomon, was always lashing the hypocrites! It was congenital. His ancestor, Solomon, was always doing the like. But here are two or three things that Solomon says about drinking:

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

Evidently Solomon would have agreed with our Irish philosopher, "Dooley," about the modern "club" where men die of what "Dooley" calls "wet rot." For Solomon goes on:

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They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

Look not thou upon the wine when it is red—

No! nor any other color.

At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

And does not the following sound more than good?

Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Undoubtedly Solomon wrote the following after his wife had scolded him for talking about himself:

Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

And how absolutely true and wise is this:

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Next to the Lord's Prayer this petition is the summit of wise asking for God's favor:

Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches. . . .

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Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

Solomon understood the hollowness of riches. He is always saying things like this and he knew:

Labor not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom . . . for riches certainly make themselves wings.

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches; and loving favour rather than silver or gold.

He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.

Don't think, though, that this wise man, Solomon, was always dealing out a lot of maxims. He was, of all rulers, the most just; of all men the most wise, of all administrators the most able, unless we except Moses. But

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he was also a poet—and a poet of the moods of hot blood and desire. Of all the poets of passion the man who wrote the Proverbs was the most burning. He sings love's very delirium.

Job is the great dramatic poem of the Bible and abounds in noble passages, lofty conceptions and overwhelming presentations of the majesty of the Creator. It is classed among the "Wisdom Books" on account of its lesson: that man is a creature too fleeting and too finite to question the justice of a God of infinite wisdom and limitless power.

There is an old story of a man who having read Hamlet for the first time exclaimed, "Why! It's made up almost entirely of quotations!" His cry would have been the same had he read Isaiah; for of all the prophets he is the most quotable. The twenty-eighth and fifty-third chapters will give you at least a partial idea of the power and beauty and solemnity of the whole majestic book. Jeremiah and some of the minor prophets, too,

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will repay you an hundredfold for every minute you devote to them.

These prophets were a mighty race, and to this day our civilization bears their stamp—clean cut as the proof impression from a newly-cut seal. Let us consider the mightiest of this mighty race.

## VI. THE STORY OF MOSES.

The story of Moses illustrates how Fate plans great men's entrances into the world as carefully as she arranges the whole pattern of their lives. And yet it is not Fate at all. The great are made so by the vigor of parents, prenatal influences, early environment. Who doubts that Bonaparte would not have developed into Napoleon, the world-conqueror, had not his mother been a woman of immense abilities and extraordinary energies? And also before he was born had she not ridden, by day and by night, with her husband in the Corsican campaigns, studying, witnessing, practicing strategy with the ablest soldiers on the field, enduring privations of march and camp and experiencing the determined courage which the battlefield inspires?

Was not Alexander the son of Philip? Was he not born in the very whirlwind of warfare?

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Did he not spring from the loins of an unexhausted statesman and warrior; and are we not told that the queen dreamed that she was to be the mother of a lion? It was not for nothing that Abraham Lincoln's parents were the poorest of the poor and the commonest of the common people. It was this which gave him his "blood-understanding" — so much deeper and truer than the brain-understanding — of the masses, of their wants, needs, destiny. It was this which gave him the breadth of wisdom to know the common mind — the breadth of wisdom so much wider and deeper than that of the ablest statesman who does not have this kinship with the millions.

If you look narrowly you will see how Fortune marks those whom she means to make the officers of her large designs by peculiarities of their birth and parenthood. It is all quite natural and entirely scientific; but it is so striking and apparently exceptional that we cannot wonder that ruder people were superstitious about such things.



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This same thing was markedly true of the man who is one of the greatest of all merely human personages—the Jewish law-giver, statesman, leader—Moses. In the first place, the Egyptians in their fear of the multiplying power of the children of Israel, as a means of retarding it used the very methods to advance it. They put the Hebrews at hard work in the open air. Still they waxed stronger! Of course, they waxed stronger! But this astonished the Egyptians, so they set taskmasters over them, and regulated the work of the Israelites with rigid severity.

And they [the Egyptians] made their lives bitter with hard bondage, . . . all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

And, of course, they grew harder-muscled, steadier-nerved, and, because of the watchfulness constantly maintained over them, quicker-minded. Every year they learned discipline and acquired an instinct for solidarity. It was the very training necessary to produce a people from whom should spring a fearless, method-

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ical, inventive statesman, full of initiative. And it was from parents of the more intellectual type among such a people, whose very intellectuality had been vitalized and made orderly by disciplined work, that Moses came.

He appeared, too, at a time when all of the male children of the Hebrews were to be killed under the orders of Pharaoh. That her son should escape this fate was undoubtedly the consuming care of Moses' mother. She kept Moses to herself until she could conceal him no longer. Then she made her little ark of bulrushes, put Moses in it and set him afloat in the water where the weeds were thick enough to keep him from being drawn away by the current. Then comes the incident of Pharaoh's daughter finding him; unwittingly giving Moses' own mother to him as a nurse; bringing up the future deliverer of Israel in her own house; thus bestowing upon him all the instruction and training of a prince. An ideal birth and an ideal training for a great work, was it not?

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Then comes the incident of Moses killing the Egyptian, which proves his volcano-like passion; the discovery of his crime and his flight, which proves his prudence; his courtesy to the daughters of the priest of Midian, which demonstrates the human touch in him; his service as a shepherd of this Midianite, whose daughter he had married (for Moses was a marrying man from the first).

I am not going to tell you all of this fascinating history of this mighty man, so full of human incident—read it for yourself in the words of the best of story-tellers and biographers. Find out how he got back to Egypt; the boldness and craft of his leadership of his oppressed people and all of the circumstances of his development as statesman and law-giver. There is not a dull line among them except the occasional genealogies—which are always dull, in the Bible and every place else.

I do not recall a more tremendous picture in any literature I ever heard of than that of the passage of the children of Israel through

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the Red Sea, and the catastrophe that overthrew the Egyptians following them. This whole chapter might be devoted to the fourteenth chapter of Exodus.

How like the fear of masses of people was the terror of the Israelites when they saw the Egyptians coming after them! And how like real greatness in all times is the splendid spirit of Moses when he told them: "Fear ye not; stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord!"

Moses was always thus inspiring the people when they needed it and rebuking them with equal vigor when they needed rebuke.

But I will pass all this and come to the laws of Moses—his real work and his immortal monument.

## VII. MOSES THE LAW-GIVER.

From the very day of Moses' return to Egypt we find him giving orders of one kind or another to all the children of Israel; and, significantly enough, they are nearly all of them about eating and drinking—evidently the prime importance of the laws of hygiene impressed itself upon this practical statesman. Moses had great difficulty with the children of Israel in the wilderness. It is interesting to see him enforcing one simple commandment after another, such as the keeping of the Sabbath—Moses, I believe, was the first of the Hebrews to put that custom into actual practice. As fast as he could get them used to it he assumed a judgeship over them. The Bible says:

Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.

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Moses' father-in-law objected to this; and they had an argument about it. Here is the way the Bible puts it:

The thing that thou doest is not good.

Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.

Decidedly the old man was, in this instance, wiser than Moses, as witness his following remarks to Moses:—

Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to Godward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:

And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them . . . the work that they must do.

Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.

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Moses saw the good sense of that, and instantly adopted the idea. There again was greatness. A great man is not he who thinks up everything for himself. The great man is he who is hospitable to ideas, no matter from what source they come.

So this was the origin of the judicial system of the Jewish people.

Very soon Moses saw that practical judgments were not enough. The people must have moral laws and observe them from generation to generation until they were transformed into human character. So God delivered to him the Ten Commandments, which he delivered to the Jewish people; and these commandments, handed down from Sinai, are, with the modifications which the Saviour made, the foundation of the morality of all the civilized world in the twentieth century.

That is a vast thing, when you think about it. All the righteousness of the world is condensed into a few sentences given to a semi-barbarous people thousands and thousands of

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years ago, and perfected by our Lord two thousand years ago. I defy any man to read the Bible without being immensely interested, and also without acquiring a respect amounting almost to awe for the mind and conscience that could have devised it—this at least, if indeed, like myself, you do not come to see that it was more than a human wisdom; it was entirely a Divine Wisdom.

Now we get to the laws of Moses. I do not think that the lawyers that are being developed now are so good as our earlier lawyers; because not many of them read the Bible, and very few, indeed, are well grounded in it. In a former time, boys who afterward became lawyers were really deeply read in the ordinances of the first and greatest law-givers of the world—the ancient Hebrews. You will be astonished to find how the roots of our law run back to the Hebrew encampments in the wilderness. But there is not time to trace out that most engaging connection.

Let us take a few of these statutes as ex-



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amples of wonderful and exceedingly practical human wisdom. The very first thing we notice is a tendency toward liberty—even toward democracy; for you must know that the Jewish people were the first champions of liberty the world ever saw. Don't forget that it was a time when slavery was universal. Yet, here is this law:

If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.

There are many and rigid laws against murder, wounding and fighting of all kinds—evidently Moses' people were very hot-blooded. Here again the tendency toward freedom occurs—Moses never lost an opportunity to make an excuse to set servants free. For example:

And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake.

And the same of a tooth.

The law of damages is minute; and up to an hundred years ago the preceding thou-

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sands of years had wrought very little improvement in it. In some respects the laws of Moses were better than ours.

For all manner of trespass . . . the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbor.

In the more delicate affairs of life the laws of Moses were most humane, considerate and just—in some respects much more so than our own to-day. And occasionally he rises to the heights of Him of the Mount of Olives, as, for example, in his famous ordinance:

Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.

And this was not only moral law, but a practical rule of action and punishment rigidly enforced. And his laws against usury are equally effective.

The foregoing laws are pretty good, are they not? But, mind you, they are only the beginnings—the first attempts of Moses. Here are some examples after he got thoroughly trained

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to his work. We must note that the very first and most numerous of these concern the health of the people. From the time of Moses until this day, the most perfect laws of hygiene ever developed were the health ordinances of the great Hebrew law-giver:

Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.

But they were forbidden to eat anything else, and, as we know to-day, for most excellent scientific reasons. And as to water-animal life:

Whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat.

But everything else in the waters were "an abomination." Then he enumerates all the kinds of birds they may not eat. Every kind of scavenger on water, on land or in the air was condemned. Moses was so particular about it that he commanded that

Whosoever toucheth the carcase of them shall be unclean until the even.

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Even to the varieties of fowl, fish and beast to which Moses confined the Israelites he applied the most searching methods to determine whether even these were in good health. I know nothing more impressive than this fact, that down to twenty-five years ago the most perfect method to determine whether any bird, fish or animal was healthful was the Jewish method of Moses. In America, up to the time of our Meat Inspection Law, the Kosher slaughter-houses were the most scientifically hygienic in all the thousands of years from the time of Moses.

Take, for example, the precautions in determining the wholesomeness of beef. In the Kosher slaughter-house the animal is elevated by the hind quarters, so that all the blood runs toward the head. Then the throat is cut by a single stroke of a long knife, designed for this purpose; and every drop of the blood is drained away. The animal is then cut open and the hand inserted and the sides within carefully felt to see whether there are any ad-

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hesions. If a single one is felt the animal is condemned. The lungs are blown into, and if the least air escapes the animal is condemned. And so on with other like precautions, every one of which, as we now know, is entirely scientific. And yet this practice is not one whit different to-day than it was in the days of Moses.

The truth is that the Jews are the only people who as a people, and speaking by and large, have been eating wholesome meat for several thousand years. Sometimes this entails sacrifice among the poor. For example, I know of one instance where a Jewish family in Germany had fattened a fowl for one of their holidays. As they were required to do, they took it to the priest, who, upon examination according to the Mosaic rules, found it unwholesome. This family immediately sold it to Christians in open market, as they had a perfect right to do, because the Christians were then eating, and have always been eating, a good, fat fowl without ever thinking whether

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there was anything the matter with it or not.

We sometimes wonder at the amazing vitality of the Jews—their physical persistence as a people—but if you read the laws of Moses and reflect that they have been observed rigidly even to this day, wonder begins to dissolve.

Of course, I cannot devote too much space to the laws of Moses; but suffer one or two further examples. Nothing shows the deep statesmanship of this wonderful man and his craft in the service of liberty so much as his institution of the year of the Jubilee, which came every fifty years. In that year every bondsman went free and every man returned to his own possessions.

And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

Everybody set free; all debts discharged; all mortgages lifted. It was something for the people to look forward to. They were not to

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be eternally chained to existing conditions. There was to be a new deal all around. What a large wisdom—what a far-seeing justice! It is far beyond anything of which we are capable to-day. Any person preaching that doctrine to-day would surely be called an anarchist.

The large tolerance and nobility of mercy in the laws of Moses, even with all of their rigor, are inspiring. For example, if a man got to be so poor that he had to sell his possessions, any of his kin could come around to the buyer and redeem them. With us in this twentieth century when a man sells anything it is gone for good and all, no matter why he had to sell it. The Mosaic law of redemption applies now only to tax sales.

The Mosaic laws on divorce contain the highest justice toward woman the world ever saw down to the time of Christ. Before Moses (and, excepting only among the Jewish people after him, for that matter), a man put away his wife at will, and she was more or

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less an outcast. But with Moses there was a regular bill of divorcement. Everything is so full of common-sense. For example, take these statutes concerning the honeymoon:

When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

This was not only kindness and an understanding of the situation; but it was great shrewdness, also. The man would probably be worth very little that year, anyhow. I must again repeat the element of mercy running through the laws of Moses, and in an age, remember, when mercy was very little heard of or understood. For example:

Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother:

or,

No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge:

or,



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If a man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge:

In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee:

or,

Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy. . . . At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it:

or,

When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow:

or,

When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

This mercy extended even to the animals, as, for example:

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Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.

Or take this, at a time, remember, when everybody thought it perfectly right to cheat—even the ancestors of Moses himself, as witness the deceit of Esau and the trick of Jacob played upon Laban. Moses would have none of that, and said:

Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.

But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight.

In short, go over the laws of Moses. They will surprise you much more than any flimsy sensation that you see in the newspapers, and they will instruct you mightily. They are golden hours indeed one spends with this master wise man of the ancient time, statesman and law-giver, dreamer and man of affairs, physician and poet.

Finally, Moses came to his end. How grandly tragic was his final day! He never set foot in the promised land toward which he had led his people. But he was permitted to

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look upon it. Indeed, that is the most, it seems, that is permitted to the vastly great. They see the vision; they plan the march; they captain the advance—but they enter not into the fulfillment. And so Moses, the greatest of the great, went up into Mount Nebo, and the promised land unrolled before him. And then the great one fell. His work was finished, and he fell. And, a hundred and twenty years though he was, “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.”



### VIII. JOSEPH THE DREAMER.

In writing of the courtship of Rebekah, I said that there were two pictures that I should like to paint. The other picture is that of "The Dreamer"—the dreamer, Joseph. For Joseph, like all men who achieve great things, was a dreamer in his youth, and a dreamer for all his life; but he was a doer and an achiever as well as a dreamer. In these dreams, too, there was a vast egotism—another common trait of all mountainous characters. For example, there was Cæsar, with his "*I came, I saw, I conquered*"; there was Cæsar telling everybody in the apparently sinking ship to fear not, "*you carry Cæsar and his fortunes.*" So I could go on with almost numberless illustrations: Gibbon, in literature, Bismarck, Ito, Frederick, Alexander, Cromwell, Rhodes, Gladstone, Napoleon, Disraeli—indeed, every-

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body big enough to be remembered—Wesley, Loyola, Mohammed, Carlyle or Ben Jonson—every mountainous character, I tell you.

I have heard “two by four” persons complain daintily, and fiercely jealous ones denounce violently, Roosevelt for “his egotism.” It’s no whit different from Joseph’s or David’s, or any of the really great of human history. Emerson explains it all—as he explains nearly everything. (Read Emerson, a little, at least, every day, as well as the Bible.) Who but one with an immortal confidence in himself, his own rectitude and the actual and potential greatness of the American nation, could rightly represent this tremendous, incalculably vast and effective—aye, and most confident—force in the world, called the American people? It is this same kind of peculiar egotism that characterizes the dreams of Joseph. But you will remember, of course, his two principal dreams.

The first was about himself and his brethren, and the Bible puts it thus in the words of

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Joseph: "Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

"For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf."

And the other dream is described with equal brevity and vividness:

"And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more: and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me."

That meant, of course, as the story explains, that not only did his brothers bow down to him but his father and mother also. It was quite natural that a man of this peculiar imaginative temperament should be called "The Dreamer," as indeed he was, and also that he should have been as unpopular with his brethren as he was popular with his infatuated father.

One day, his brethren went to shear and feed their father's sheep in Shechem. His father, Israel, sent Joseph out to find his brethren. He

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had a little difficulty in finding them, for they had moved on to another place called Dothan. There Joseph proceeded. When he was quite afar off one of his brothers saw him coming, but Joseph did not see them. Oh, no! he was "dreaming." You can see him now if you will close your eyes—lithe and strong and fine, wandering slowly, and his great dark eyes filled with visions of another time and of another land, of great enterprises and splendid duties and mighty deeds—dreaming, always dreaming, and with the dreamer's halo about him.

Again it was drawing toward evening, we may well believe. The sun was sinking behind the western hills; the trees were silhouetted against the sky; and down in the valley the brethren attending the sheep, and toward them with unseeing and yet all-seeing eyes came Joseph, the dreamer; and when his brothers saw him coming, they said one to another: "Behold, this dreamer cometh." Why has not some great artist painted that marvelous picture?



## IX. ST. PAUL: ORATOR AND MISSIONARY.

Now for another turn of the Scriptural cinematograph; for the Great Volume is just that, revealing successive pictures, startling changes, no two alike and all interesting; that's the point I'm making now—the Bible is “interesting.” Well then, some oratory.

Everybody is interested in oratory. Some of us may think we are not. But let such a scoffer at the power of speech fall under the spell of a master of the art and he changes his mind. So, let us take the master effort of the most finished orator of ancient times, and possibly of all time—of course, you know that I am referring to Paul's oration on Mars' Hill. We hear this perfect example of the art of oratory read to us and get very little of its meaning, none of its beauty, and absolutely no idea whatever of the power with which it was

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spoken and of its almost hypnotic effect over Paul's difficult audience. It is hard, of course, to get it to you in cold type. But, perhaps, we can get some notion of it.

In the first place, then, remember that Paul was a man of finished education. He had been very decidedly a man of the world. There was little that anybody could teach him. It is easy to see how, after his conversion, he became by common consent the leading advocate of Christianity. He went about preaching the gospel with inspired eloquence and with a logic that no man before or since has equaled.

This was the state of affairs when he came to Athens. The Athens of that time was in her decadence. She had reached the height of her achievements in the time of Pericles—heights so lofty and made by her genius so brilliant that they yet flame before our eyes across the centuries. In Paul's time Athens was the center of a super-civilized, overeducated, decadent people. The Athenians believed in nothing,

## ST. PAUL : ORATOR AND MISSIONARY

and, like all agnostics, were really superstitious about everything. The Bible says that

All the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.

So when Paul came among them they were interested, curious, amused. Here was "something new" at last. So they asked Paul to exploit his doctrines, and, of course, he consented. That's what he was there for. They took him to the Areopagus, saying:

May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

Paul understood his audience. He waited till there was absolute silence—until you could "hear a pin drop," as our saying has it. And then quite naturally, as though he were uttering the most commonplace truism imaginable, he began his immortal address, as follows:

Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious.

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Then he paused. That sentence fixed them—absolutely chained their attention. He struck them at their weakest point; for, although they were the most superstitious of creatures, they prided themselves that they were not superstitious at all. After a moment, when he had let this thunderbolt of a sentence penetrate into their very souls, he went on proving the statement by example (and here the rules of the art are perfectly observed; you must support each statement by an illustration). So he continued:

For, as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To THE UNKNOWN God.

Undoubtedly this sentence was delivered with a little more earnestness, but still not much. It was a mere matter of fact. But he delivered it with a little more earnestness; so that the following sentence, which was to be spoken with fervor, might not be too abrupt. For the next sentence captured that audience.

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Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare  
I unto you.

This was not shouted, we know very well; but we also know that it was uttered with an earnestness and a physical and nervous power which was all the more overwhelming because not violent. In three sentences he had caught their attention, challenged their pride, illustrated it, and reached the climax of his exordium.

To describe the remainder of this oration would be merely to repeat it. It is the shortest important speech ever made, excepting only Lincoln's undying Gettysburg address. In less than one hundred and fifty words he put the argument for and assertion of the living God, of salvation and of the resurrection of the dead. And in doing this he even included a quotation from the Greek poets. It is all very simple, powerful, convincing.

When he had closed, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear thee again on this matter." So Paul accomplished what he came

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to Athens to do. He had planted the seed. He had aroused interest. He had spoken words that his hearers could never forget—words that would be in their minds when they went to rest, and in their hearts when, awakening, they arose from their couches.

I recommend you to read, just as a matter of entertainment, the whole story of Saul's conversion and, as the renamed Paul, of his travels, adventures and final end. And if in the search for "good reading" you want a little very solid, very sensible and very beautiful ethics—philosophy that passes that of Emerson, both in its charm and in its truthfulness (and that is saying a good deal)—then read the twelfth of Romans.

## X. CONCLUSION.

This little book draws rapidly to a close and yet I have said almost nothing about the Saviour. Somehow or other I couldn't bring myself to it. The story of our Lord, as a mere matter of fascinating reading is above the charm of any narrative you will find. His divinity aside, the practical wisdom of his sayings exceeds those of Solomon. But what he did, what he lived and what he said cannot be retold with an infinitesimal part of the entertainment which the gospels themselves give. That is true, of course, of the whole Bible—true of Moses, of Joshua and David and the rest—but with the Master, somehow, "it's different."

I never read any essay upon our Lord but with a certain kind of repulsion. He needs no interpreter; comment and commentary on

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Him seem sacrilege—of course, such a view is undoubtedly unreasonable and unintelligent, but I just feel that way about it. The only worth-while study of our Redeemer is that of Renan, and he, as everybody knows, was an infidel and tries to prove the Saviour no Redeemer at all. But you, reader, you read the life and words of Jesus of Nazareth as given in the gospels—just as you read them for yourself. That's all I suggest. And, take my word for it, you'll not find them dull.

I think that we Americans are falling into the same trouble that the men of Athens had fallen into at the time of Paul's immortal oration on Mars' Hill. The men of Athens were continually looking for "something new"—as we are told, the Athenians and the strangers there spent their time in nothing but telling or hearing some new thing.

But the Bible is full of the most extraordinary experiences that few people know anything about. They are tucked away here and there throughout this astonishing volume. As



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I have said before, they are of every kind, too. Incidents of love of the most passionate and yet the tenderest and the most self-sacrificing kind; incidents of anger that set our blood on fire even in the reading of them; incidents of the blacker passions rioting unrestrained, wanton and desperate; incidents of craft and cunning more subtle than those told by Conan Doyle in his Sherlock Holmes, or by that master of all modern writers of plot and intrigue, Edgar Allan Poe.

Perhaps the most engaging as well as most surprising of all achievements of Bible characters is the work of the world's greatest law-giver, Moses. You shall find that it is almost inconceivable that any man should rise among a people so oppressed as the Hebrews had been in Egypt—and so savage as they became after the Exodus—who could write statutes of such practical wisdom, such depth and forethought as are the laws of Moses.

I have advised every law student who has ever consulted me to study the laws of Moses

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before he begins his Blackstone, and keep on studying the laws of Moses after he has completed his law course. And then keep on studying the laws of Moses all during his practice. And, best of all, these ordinances of the ancient Hebrews are not a bit heavy and musty as are most law books. They are bright, keen, condensed and to the point. In short, they are "good reading."

The Bible is the most quotable book in all literature. You may take Shakespeare and Dante together, take Milton and Horace, put in the Koran and Confucius, and then boil them all down, and the quotable things in all of them put together are but a fraction of the sayings in the Bible that fasten themselves in your mind.

[THE END]











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